

1.2 Introduction to the Theme

For Teachers: *Before beginning the skills-based learning, it is worth exposing students to the broad idea of the theme; students should be given each text in isolation, along with guided classroom discussion. This may require the teacher to do some basic review around the analysis of each type of text (poem vs. aphorisms vs. essay, in this case) with students in conjunction with a discussion of the content. Piercy’s poem, “To Be of Use” has been selected for its focus on productivity and the human desire (like the vase, now in a museum for display only) to do meaningful work, highlighting the idea of utility. Aphorisms from Franklin’s “Poor Richards” also stress the importance of utility and the inherent value of work, as “the early bird catches the worm,” and such euphemisms suggest our concept of functional success. Lastly, Steinbeck’s “Paradox and Dream” provides a more modern critique of America’s “way of life” or the “American Dream”—in his piece, the breakdown of what we do and want and believe about success provides a place to reflect on those ideas of utility in the previous two sources.*

*Teachers may choose to begin with the prompt given in the description of the thematic focus overview above and then have students discuss how each piece—in isolation and then in conjunction—contributes to the conversation about work and the values in our culture of work in the United States (currently and historically). These discussions can serve as an informal assessment (by participation), or teachers may choose to formalize them through structured student-led discussions, utilization of the question and reflection assessments, or the dynamic mind-mapping activity (whole class or small groups where each group has a specific text or thematic focus).**

Ultimately, students will—in a low-stakes environment—get an introduction to the type of reading, thinking, and discussion inherent to AP Seminar. CTE Teachers may also choose to incorporate pathway-specific, career-focused articles or arguments in conjunction with the broader thematic texts to situate the research in relevant content-specific knowledge.

**This sample course will utilize a small group mind-mapping activity as a specific demonstration of these skills. See assignment details in Module 1 for this activity’s implementation guide.*